

FORM B – BUILDING

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

18-321

Orleans

EAS.1277

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town/City: EASTHAM

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): South Eastham

Photograph



Address: 290 Governor Prence Road

Historic Name: Obed and Lottie Fulcher House

Uses: Present: Single Family Dwelling House

Original: Single Family Dwelling House

Date of Construction: [1930-1938]

Source: Census records, 1938 USGS aerial survey

Style/Form: Ranch

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Concrete block

Wall/Trim: Wood clapboards, wood shingles/ Wood

Roof: Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:

One-bay garage (1930s, Photo 3)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

None on record

Condition: Good

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.29 acres

Setting: This property is situated on a rural road that was once agricultural with a few farmsteads but now includes a mix of modern subdivisions, conservation lands and wetlands. This house is centered on its small, level parcel. The property is landscaped with expanses of lawn, mature shrubbery, and a split rail fence along the street. A gravel driveway leads to a detached garage.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Eric Dray, Preservation Consultant, for

Organization: Eastham Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): April 2025

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The form of this ranch consists of a long, rectangular block with a shallow-pitched gable roof. A deep shed roof extends from the east elevation forming a screen porch (Photo 2). The building rests on a concrete block foundation. The front (south) elevation is clad in wood clapboards and the remaining elevations are clad in wood shingles with plain cornerboards. The roof is clad in asphalt shingles with projecting eaves typical of cottage construction. A short brick chimney rises from the roof ridge. Windows consist primarily of wood, single-glazed, 6/6 double-hung sash, but also includes a few wood 2/2 windows. Some of these windows may be original.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Incorporated as Nauset Plantation in 1646, and changed to Eastham in 1651, Eastham territory originally extended south to Pleasant Bay in Orleans and north beyond Wellfleet Harbor. The early development pattern for what we now know as Eastham was impacted by its absence of deep-water harbor facilities. Relatively fertile soil led to dispersed agricultural settlement, but residential and commercial development was concentrated to the north at Wellfleet Harbor and to the south at Town Cove and Pleasant Bay. When the separate towns of Wellfleet and Orleans were created in the late-18th century, Eastham became and remained one of the least populated towns on the Cape throughout the 19th century.

In the 19th century, Eastham was the agricultural center of the Outer Cape. Crops evolved over time; corn and dairy were surpassed in the early-20th century by asparagus and turnips - two crops well suited for the sandy soil. In 1900, 58% of Eastham's workers were employed as farmers, but by 1930 that number had dwindled to 21%. Summer resort development, including cottage colonies and subdivisions of former farmland that would transform Eastham, had begun in earnest in the 1920s as middle-class access to car ownership increased and Cape roads were improved.

This small parcel was originally part of the extensive land holdings of John and Josephine Fulcher, who built the ca. 1859 house across the street at 155 Governor Prence Road (EAS.770). This small cottage was likely built by their son, Obed A. Fulcher, as a rental cottage or worker's cottage. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) began conducting periodic aerial photographic surveys of Cape Cod starting in 1938. That year, this cottage is clearly shown, along with the farmhouse across the street to the southeast (Photo 3).

As of the 1870 census, John Fulcher (1838-1899) lived with his wife, Josephine (1840-1916), and their first five children. They went on to have five more children, including Obed Abelino Fulcher, their youngest. John Fulcher served the town as a field driver, highway surveyor and market farmer, including cabbages, potatoes, and turnips. The year after John's death, the 1900 census showed his widow living at 155 Governor Prence Road with her sons John G., Louis Y., and Obed A., all farm workers, and daughters Josephine and Sarah. In 1902, the town taxed her on 61.25 acres, a house worth \$600, a barn at \$250, assorted outbuildings, and farm animals. In March 1916, Josephine H. Fulcher deeded the farmstead at 155 Governor Prence Road to her son Obed.¹ In 1923, his brother John deeded his share of a twelve-acre parcel that included this parcel to Obed.²

Obed Abelino Fulcher (1883-1977) may have been named after his uncle Abelino Doane who lived on the State Highway. Obed married Lottie Marion Young (1891-1984) of Chatham in 1905. By 1930 Obed Fulcher's household included ten persons—himself,

¹ Barnstable County Registry of Deeds, Book 347/ Page 78.

² Book 391/ Page 576.

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his wife, married daughter Clara Fuller and her son Clyde, sons Herbert and Robert (born 1920), daughters Hazel, Ruth, and Ellen Janet (born 1922, 1926, and 1928 respectively), and a boarder. He owned 21.5 acres, along with twelve cows, a horse, and forty chickens. In the 1940 census, Obed Fulcher is listed with \$6000 in real property, he was working for the town doing road work for the town, his wife Lottie was a cook at a private school, and there were five others in the household. In 1941 and 1947 Fulcher, was taxed on his house, his barn/hay, a poultry house, a pump house, and "Speare cottage." Obed and Lottie Fulcher owned and occupied 155 Governor Prence Road until 1974, and that house remains in the Fulcher family.

The most interesting entry for his taxable holdings in 1941 and 1947 as it relates to this property is "Speare cottage" – could that be a reference to this cottage? This cottage was sold by Obed and Lottie Fulcher in 1965. As noted above, the cottage was shown on the 1938 USGS survey, and we know that Obed and Lottie lived at 155 Governor Prence until the 1970s. This would mean that Obed Fulcher might have built this house as a rental property or worker housing. The 1930 and 1940 federal census included information on whether a given household owned or rented their house. As of the 1930 census, there were no households near Obed Fulcher living in a rented house. As of the 1940 census, however, there were three households immediately adjacent to him in rented houses. One of those rented houses may be this cottage. This could mean the cottage was built sometime between 1930 and 1938.

There is no "Speare" name in that 1940 census, so the reference to that name in 1940s tax records remains a mystery. All three rented houses nearby had one occupant each. Two were occupied by siblings of Obed Fulcher - Clara (Higgins) Fulcher, widow of Obed's brother John G. Fulcher who had died in 1938, and Sarah Fulcher. The third was occupied by Michael Griffin who was then 59 and had no occupation. He had never married, and in prior census records, he was living with members of the Knowles family and working as a hired hand on their farm on Fort Hill Road.

Curiously, all three rental properties appeared to be vacant in the 1950 census. As noted above, Obed and Lottie sold this cottage in 1965. They sold it to Ruth M. Urell of NY, NY.³ She likely used this cottage seasonally. She was living in Newburgh, NJ in 1974 when she sold it to Ann C. Letendre of Vernon, CT.⁴ In 1993, Letendre was still living in Vernon, CT when she sold it to Daniel Kowalski of Weymouth, MA.⁵ In 2001, a Kowalski realty trust sold it to the current owner, Phillip D. Eichorn and Jennifer Browne, then of West Roxbury, now of Kent, England.⁶

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³ Book 1311/ Page 88.

⁴ Book 2059/ Page 108.

⁵ Book 8677/ Page 200.

⁶ Book 14022/ Page 195.

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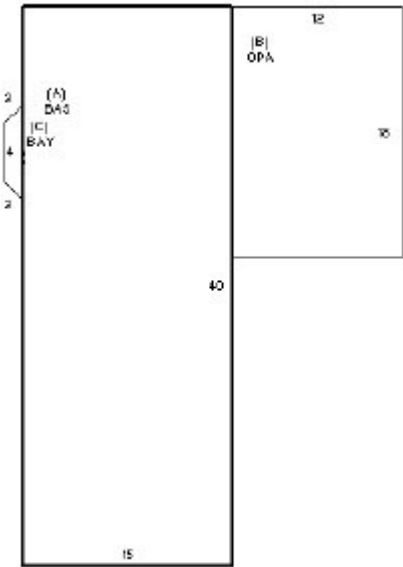


Figure 1. Assessor Sketch.



Photo 2. View from Governor Prence Rod, looking northwest.



Photo 3. View of garage from Governor Prence Road, looking NNE.

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Photo 3. Detail of 1938 USGS aerial photographic survey (arrow to 290 Governor Prence Road added).